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# OF OUR LADY OF AFRICA

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# CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF AFRICA (White Sisters)

ORIGIN AND AIM: The Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa was founded in 1869 by Cardinal Lavigerie, to rescue, moralize and regenerate the pagan and Mohammedan woman, and through her attain the family and society. Exclusively vowed to the Apostolate in Africa, the Sisters devote their lives to the natives in every work of mercy and charity . . . Catechetical. Medical, Educational.

#### GOVERNMENT AND APPROBATION:

The Congregation is governed by a Superior General who depends directly on the Holy See. The Constitutions were definitely approved by decree the 14th of December 1909 and promulgated on the 3rd of January 1910.

SPIRIT: The Spirit of the Congregation is one of obedience, humility, simplicity, and zeal; and the life of the Sisters one of poverty, mortification and labor.

The Congregation numbers over 1,500 Professed Sisters who are devoting their lives to the Natives in 120 Missions, that spread out through—

North Africa: Algeria, Tunisia, Atlas Mountains, Sahara.

West Africa: The Gold Coast. French West Africa.

East Africa: Kenya, Nyassaland, Tanganyika, Uganda, Rhodesia. Belgian Congo. Rwanda, Urundi.

#### OUR AMERICAN HOME IS AT:

White Sisters Convent 319 Middlesex Avenue Metuchen, New Jersey

#### THE MESSENGER OF

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#### SPIRITUAL ADVANTAGES

Three Masses are said monthly for the living and deceased benefactors of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. Moreover, they share in the prayers and apostolic labors of over fifteen hundred White Sisters, who are working in the African Missions; and in the prayers and acts of self denial that the Natives, so willingly, offer up daily for their benefactors.

# TO AVOID THE MISSIONS UNNECESSARY EXPENSE.

kindly notify us immediately of a change of address. If you do not, the postal authorities will tax us for their notification.

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1847



1947

## Mother Salome

Mother Salome, may we do the honor
On this, the Centenary of thy birth,
To God we offer a Triduum of Praise,
A Hymn of Thanks, a Canticle of Joy;
May our Prayers be as pleasing as rain
to the desert,

May thy blessings be more numerous than the Sands of the Sahara,

Oh, that we appreciate the goodness of our Foundress!

Oh, may we merit-to be like to her!

Metuchen, N. J.—It is with a heart full of gratitude that we united to our fifteen hundred Sisters—
in 162 communities of the Institude, 130 of which are
on the African missions—for a triduum of Thanksgiving commemorating the centenary of the birth of

Venerable Mother M. Salome co-foundress, with

Cardinal Lavigerie, of our Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. On Tuesday,

March 4th, a High Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated in our Chapel by Reverend A. Lacasse, of
the White Fathers, Washington, D. C. His Excellency the Most Reverend Joseph J. M. Blomjous, W.F.,

Vicar Apostolic of Musoma-Maswa, also honored us
with his presence on this joyful day.

## Catholic Action at Ushirombo

by Sr. M. Wilfrida, W.S.\*

THE AIM OF FEMININE CATHOLIC
ACTION, founded some time ago at
Ushirombo, is to destroy the deep
roots of paganism, which always tend to
connect an unhappy past to a hopeful
future.

The Christian woman, fortified by the truth, has a vital mission in Central Africa, where her education and instruction are being developed more and more. Once having acquired a diploma she figures very well in the class room or in the hospital. Very soon, no doubt we will see her in an office; then, later still, there is no reason why she should not become a doctor, lawyer, notary, etc. Who knows. But why should she not, above all, become a woman-apostle? Beside the Native Sisters, who already number over a thousand, the Christian woman will be an apostle in Catholic Action. The Christian African woman is marvelously endowed for this sublime vocation.

Happily for the missions, Catholic Action does exist and functions admirably, with devoted members, who have proved themselves equal to the task. Unfortunately, the dark outlook is that the members number too few. Evidently the members are the cream of the crop, and this chosen category, chosen in every sense of the word, is by no means the greatest number.

In describing the members of Feminine Catholic Action at Ushirombo, it is an easier task to speak of one or the other of these generous women. Today let us follow Josephine and her companions on an errand of charity. All morning they are busy about their homes, putting things in order lest by their absence any of their duties should be neglected. At noon, rain or shine, despite the beating rays of the sun or the pouring rain, they are off in search of the sick to be cared for, of the dving infants to be baptized or adults to be instructed. They encounter railleries, jeers, mockery, sarcasm, persecutions from those who ignore their heroic charity. What matters? The disciple is not greater than his Master, and they rejoice to so resemble Him.

After walking for half an hour they arrive at a poor hut. Beside the door a woman is busy grinding meal for dinner. Greeting the visitors amiably, she invites them to be seated, however, they accept the invitation. In a corner of the hut an obscure figure lies crouched down. "Come here, my child," said Josephine, very kindly. No reply. She insisted, modifying her voice with a reassuring tone: "Be not afraid, little one, come a little closer..." Still no reply. "But," said the woman who resumed her grinding, "that is not a child, it is my old sister." "What, your old sister? Are you joking?" "No, no, I am not joking. It is Nakwezi; she is sick and helpless; she was at Lunzewe, where there



Ushirombo, Vicariate of Tabora, Tanganyika, East Africa.

was no one to care for her; she had someone bring her here; but I have nothing to give her, I am too poor myself."

Josephine arises and approaches the sick woman, who is about fitty years, hunchbacked and deformed. She can walk but a few steps while leaning very heavily on her stick. The old woman sits all doubled up in a corner. Josephine and her companion showed so much compassion and interest in her that the poor creature let them touch her. Being in confidence now, she told her story. She had suffered much from hunger, cold, illness, nakedness, rebuffs and mockery.

Josephine in her turn spoke and for a long time; she spoke of the good Lord, so good to the unfortunate, such as we are; so good to her, poor Nakwezi. She tells this woman, afflicted with so many troubles, to have patience! She implants seeds of hope in this tortured heart: "The day will come when our Lord, so good and so powerful, will change all your sufferings into . . . how is it possible? I so crippled, miserable and rejected, I can recover? I could be happy—be cured? Is it possible?

Yes, if the good Lord wills, you could be cured instantly. However, if He wishes to leave this painful suffering in your body, it is because He wants, above all, to give happiness to your heart and peace to your soul. In that way your sufferings themselves shall be changed into joy.

-How can that be done?

—It would take me a long time to tell you; you see, we have already spoken a long time and the sun is beginning to set; we must return home before dark. We will come back again . . . I have an idea; why not come to the mission?

—Go to the Mission? I, who can not walk even as far as that path.

—You will come to live there, and you can learn the way to happiness which can be yours, if you wish.

—But who would consent to receive this miserable invalid in their home when everyone is afraid of me?

—No, do not say that. The Christians are not afraid of infirms; they are sorry for them; they love them as their brothers and sisters; even more than their brothers or sisters who are not ill."

Nakwezi hesitates; this is something new that they tell mel Could it be true? She seems to fear  $\alpha$  trap.

"You doubt? Are you afraid?" chides Josephine who surmises what is going on in the head of this unfortunate pagan woman. "Are you afraid to come to my house? I will care for you, love you, teach you to know our God, who wishes all his children to be good as He Himself is towards all, and especially towards those who suffer. Do you want to come to my house?"

Nakwezi, overcome with joy, her eyes shining with hope, is transfigured, almost beautiful, when she expresses to her charitable visitor the gratitude that fills her heart, and seizing the hand extended to her, kisses it tearfully. Josephine and her companion leave her in her state of joy, with these words: "Tomorrow, very early, we shall return to fetch you!"

Toward morning, they set out in search of porters. They met up with many refusals. Finally two brave men consent to take part in this charitable excursion. "Go ahead, we will follow you," they tell the women.

They proceed, now and then glancing back but see no one. They arrive at Nakwezi's home . . . a long long time . . . still no one comes: "What are we going to do?" asks Josephine. "These men made fun of us . . ." Evidently their bravery was just on the surface. They will be put to shame by a feeble woman,—who only yesterday was looked down upon as a mere slave to be despised and abused,—become a Christian Apostle, surpassing them in strength, courage and charity.

"What shall we do?" asks Josephine; and to herself she answers the question: "I shall take her on my back and carry her myself." Stupefied, her companion says "Carry her? Are you serious? The road is long and hard, and . . ." Josephine wastes no words but acts. She places the invalid on her shoulders and starts up the road; forgetting that she is no longer of an age to carry out so generous a design, she goes along rapidly at first but half way up the road she must admit defeat and deposits her precious burden in the village of Igulwa, in a Christian home, promising to return tomorrow.

After a good night's sleep, Josephine, this time alone, returns to Igulwa. Nakwezi lets herself be carried and the second half of the journey is rapidly covered. Alas! It is hard to say which of these two women is the happiest. Josephine installs her infirm companion in her own home

( Please turn to page 15 )

THESE RALLYING PHRASES reminded us of the words spoken by His Holiness the late Pius XI to an African Bishop: "The sun shines successively on different parts of the earth—At present the Sun of Grace is shining on Africa.—The times of Providence strike hourly. We must be on the alert so as to leave neither before nor after but on the stroke sharp. And I, the Pope, declare that Africa's hour has struck."

And of the challenge to America and its youth by HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS XII in his radio broadcast to the United States, November 24th, 1946, commemorating the tercentenary of the North American martyrs. "They (the North American martyrs) did not want to go to Heaven alone. Their faith was too precious not to wish to share it with others. Their sense of being Catholic were incomplete, did it not make them conscious of a duty to all peoples of the world. The missionary spirit they knew it well, is not a virtue of supererogation expected of the chosen few. Catholic spirit and missionary spirit are one and the same. Catholicity is an essential mark of the true Church. One is not genuinely interested in and devoted to the Church unless one is interested in and devoted to its universality, that is to say, to its taking root and flourishing everywhere on earth .....

"Their message of missionary zeal, fired by love of God and God's love for souls, is louder and more insistent at this hour, when war and war's aftermath have decimated so many ranks of missionaries and clogged so many sources of mission help. That message rings across your blessed country, so providentially spared the horrors and destruction of other lands

Let men pause and harken to its appeal. IT IS THE HOUR OF AMERICA. THE MISSIONS AWAIT THE RESPONSE."

They also recall the enthusiastic introduction of Africa by HIS EMINENCE THE LATE CARDINAL HISNLEY—then Apostolic Delegate to British East Africa—to Reverend Father Considine of Maryknoll, while on his visit to Africa as Director of the Information Service

# "Africa's Hour — Ad

—His Excellency the Most Revere Vicar Apostolic of Musoma-

Country within 30 0.

We got the men and
But if Central of
there passed and last to Christ.

of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide: "Now you will see the Church really on the march. In Asia are many bright spots, it is true. But here in Africa, particularly in Central Africa, the tree of the Lord Lifts itself up so rapidly that it seems to grow before your very eyes."

All these timely, authoritative messages rang once more in our ears and hearts as we listened to His Excellency the Most Reverend Joseph J. M. Blomjous, W.F., Vicar Apostolic of the newly erected vicariate of Musoma-Maswa, in Tanganyika Territory, East Africa, as His Excellency developed the accompanying message, written for you dear Readers and Friends of Our Lady of Africa Missions.

"One of the main mission problems of our

# America's Opportunity'

Reverend Joseph M. J. Blomjous, W.F. soma-Maswa, T. T., East Africa.

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Africa

times is the future of the Catholic Church in Central Africa i.e. Negro Africa, between the two great African deserts—the Sahara and the Kalahari. If we get the men and the means NOW, Central Africa will be Catholic and one of the most intensely Catholic regions of the world within the next thirty or forty years. But the brightness of the situation must not eradicate in our Catholic minds the dilemma: or a Mohammedan or an atheistic land, where the Catholic religion and Christianity will be barred and which will be a danger for the rest of the world, if we do not get the men and the means now."

"Now, yes, — the road is open to us and the time is ripe, the old paganism is breaking down. The Natives do not want to be pagans anymore, especially the young generation, they are even ashamed to be pagans and they are seeking for a higher religion. This general trend has been very much accentuated by the war: a large proportion of the youth served in the armed forces of the British, French and Belgian armies. For instance from Tanganyika Territory alone 200,000 were mobilized out of a population of some 5,000,000. These men came in close contact with Western civilization and with the Catholic religion, either in the lands where they fought, or through Christian comrades, and above all through the magnificent work of the Catholic Chaplains. In the British East Africa Command alone there were some 18,000 actual conversions recorded, and the vast majority of those who have returned home pagan are now asking for instruction in the Catholic religion. To sum it all in one word, the main obstacle, the old paganism has broken down and the Harvest is ready to be reaped-but we need the men and the means.

"Yes Central Africa is bright with hope for the growth of the Catholic Church, but lest we forget, God's enemy the devil enrages at the prospect of being sent out of a land where he has ruled supreme master for centuries, nay millenaries. If the Natives no longer wish to serve him under the garb of pagan gods and witchcraft, the father of lies is not short of disguises. Mohammedanism and modern atheism (in all the ism forms) are trying hard to acclimatize themselves in Central Africa. Islamism is spreading everywhere, and once the Natives have become Mohammedans, they are very difficult On the other hand modern atheism, civilization without God, is diffused with the neutral education given in the government schools, which is practically pagan and Godless as the name neutral implies. At the pace that Central Africa is going we can believe that its religious destines will be quite definitely settled within the next two generations.

"The road is still open, missionaries are welcome in Africa, but the signs of time indicate that this happy condition will not last forever. In the wake of civilization, nationalism is growing everywhere in Central Africa. If this land is not Catholic within the next thirty or forty years, missionaries will no longer be permitted to enter.

"However Central Africa still remains a land bright with hope for Holy Mother the Church. Where there are now 7,000,000 Catholics in Central Africa today, seventy-five

#### "AFRICA'S HOUR - AMERICA'S OPPORTUNITY"

(Concluded)

years ago no missionaries had yet penetrated, the word of God had never been heard. The Native Catholic Church of Central Africa now has two Bishops from her ranks, hundreds of Priests, Brothers and Sisters; thousands of Seminarians, Catechists and Teachers: besides a very well organized Catholic Action chosen and trained from among the elite of her faithful. These results were achieved against and despite all sorts of obstacles, the main one of which was a paganism deeply rooted in the soul of its inhabitants for millenaries. Then there was a complete lack of means of communications, bad sanitary conditions, unknown diseases and fevers which made travelling hazardously difficult if not practically impossible. It must be added also that the missionary personnel of Central Africa has always been many times too small. Therefore it is no exaggeration to assert that if in seventy-five years we were able to build a Catholic community of 7,000,000-and good fervent Catholics at that-surely now that the main obstacles are quickly disappearing we should be able to get a Catholic majority within the next two generations, provided we get the men and the means now.

"After the Holy Father, I repeat that the answer to Africa's dilemma is in the hands of Catholic America: because aid from Europe is rapidly diminishing, vocationally and financially; because America alone came out of this war unscathed and even stronger than before. Therefore our hope rests in the youthful, vigorous Catholic Church of America. Give us the men, give us the means, and within two generations Central Africa with its 100,000,000 will be one of the greatest Catholic lands of the world."

#### **EDITOR'S NOTE**

After reading His Excellency the Most Reverend J. Blomjous' unstinting appeal for Central Africa, we believe our Readers would appreciate information on His Excellency's mission field and needs. The newly erected Vicariate Apostolic of Musoma-Maswa in Tanganyika Territory is the portion of

the Lord's vineyard entrusted to his care. In its territory is a population of 500,000 souls of whom 10,000 only are Catholic. For the time being the mission force consists of thirteen White Fathers, four Maryknoll priests, two Native Sisters and one novice. There are four mission stations of which two only are permanent structures. Just recently news reached the Bishop that one of the stations was destroyed by fire with damages estimated at \$15,000.

We should be very happy indeed to forward to His Excellency any help financial or material which African Mission Friends would like to give to aid this new African Mission Vicariate starting from scratch. As suggestion matter, church goods, ciboria, altar linens, albs, vestments, also household goods such as pots and pans—new and used (provided they are in good condition, worth the transportation expense) would be gratefully received and gladly packed for His Excellency.

Most of all may we beg a special remembrance in your good prayers that God may bless His Excellency's endeavors for God's greater glory and the salvation of countless souls.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

#### RANSOMED PAGAN BABIES

Sacred Heart School, Worcester, Mass.

O. L. of Sorrows School, Hartford, Conn.

Mr. J. Tompkins

St. Lawrence School, Hartford, Conn.

Miss M. Colling

Miss V. Valek

Miss P. Bahosh

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Miss M. M. Santori

Mrs. D. Gaudet

#### TO KEEP A SANCTUARY LAMP BURNING

Miss F. Caufield

Mrs. M. Stuka

#### TO DRESS A CHILD FOR FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

Mrs. C. Plumbey

#### CATHOLIC ACTION AT USHIROMBO

(Continued from page 11)

and Nakwezi is hardly able to believe this sweet reality as she still can not understand the moving force of this delicate charity . . . Later she will know.

The following day Nakwezi is seen crouched near the missionary in the class-room. Henceforth she will be remarkable for regularity, coming thrice weekly to hear the word of God. She must struggle to grasp it but does not lack good will, her soul is as warm wax which receives the impression of the great truths; Nakwezi is intelligent. Gradually God fills her heart and soul.

What joy is hers on the day, a thousand times blessed, when she finally receives the regenerating Sacrament, and with it the name of Lucia, which she herself had chosen. Little matters her infirmities which she now blesses, for she knows they were for her the road to salvation, and she understands the promises of Josephine the first day they met—"Your sufferings will be changed to joy." She experiences the peace of the pure souls, the contentment of the true children of God. Furthermore, she wishes to prove her gratitude to this God who has showered on her His blessings. What has she to offer Him. She prays hard; she is deeply absorbed in her thanksgiving. What does she tell the good Master? Ohl many things. She asks for one thing in particular and Jesus grants it to her. She remains lost in the happiness of belonging to Him.

A few days later Lucia goes in search of Mother Superior, Directress of Feminine Catholic Action. She has a petition to make, one favor to ask her, the same thing which she asked of Our Lord on the day of her Baptism. If the good Lord granted it, how could the Mother Superior refuse?

Let us listen to this naive and touching conversation:

"Mama, I want to give the good Lord what I myself have received.

—That is fine, Lucia, what are you going to give Him?

—Mama, the women of Catholic Action have saved me. I want to do for others, out of love for the good God, what they have done for me. Mama, let me enter into Catholic Action. —But Lucia, you can not walk. Your intentions are good; the good Lord will be satisfied with them and will reward you.

—It is true, Mama, that I can not walk; my legs are bad, but my tongue is good I assure you, it is as good as two. My ears are good too, and large, and can hear from afar off. They will be good for something, you will see. . . .

—Very well, Lucia, we shall see. You have my consent to try.

—You see, Mama, the time for me to rest is over, now it is time to act.

Soon Lucia received an occasion to show her ability and to prove her Christian devotedness.

A woman stranger came from afar to have a hideous sore treated. The news reaches Lucia. She drags herself to the Mother Superior's office: "Mama," she says, "Let me care for this poor creature, I want to do for her what was done for me."

—Very willingly, Lucia, you shall be her good Samaritan, but while you care for her wretched sores on her body, think of the soul of this poor woman. Remember, you are a member of Catholic Action.

—Yes, Mama, I will think of it, you shall see. Pray for me. Thank you, Mama. Goodby.

There we see Lucia, a cripple, installed
( Please turn the page )

#### **OBITUARY**

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Miss N. Roerty, Jersey City, N. J., Guild Member

Mr. M. Fagen, Brooklyn, N. Y.



Lucya Nakwezi asking
her admission to
Catholic Action—on
the right: Josephina
—to the left: Aloysia,
President of Feminine
Catholic Action.

at the bedside of the stranger. For days, nights and weeks she cares for her with the devotedness of a mother, the charity of a Christian and the zeal of an apostle. Her kindness, patience, attentions and kind words subject the soul to the work of grace. The bodily sores refuse to heal; they become wormy, it is repugnant, repelling, nauseating. Not discouraged, the kind infirmarian cleans the infected surface, changes the dressings and gently speaks of the good Lord in Heaven.

"I did my best," she tells Mother Superior, who has an eye on her disciple of Catholic Action; "but the wicked worms would not leave and the sore refuses to heal; I have not the power to heal the body but . . . I can fill Heaven with people."

She then undertakes to instruct her patient in religion; soon this one will die, time is quickly passing. How can one not believe in a religion that inspires so much

1847 - 1947

The characteristic virtue of our missionary vocation, must evidently be an indefatigable zeal in the pursuit of souls, marked by total abnegation of self in the works of apostolate.

Venerable Mother M. Salome

charity? The patient is touched; dying, she accepts and receives Baptism; she is reborn under the name of Marie, and that very day, her white soul leaves its infected prison on its flight to Paradise. Lucia is beside herself with joy. This is her first conquest.

She cries over the death of Marie as a mother over her child. Kneeling beside her "child of God," she herself dresses the mortal remains, joining the hands on the breast, in the attitude of prayer and of faith. Having accomplished this last act of Christian charity, Lucia sets out to find another occasion to do the work of Catholic Action.

\*The former Miss M. Riel, Fall River, Mass.

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Request your Friends and Acquaintances to subscribe to her Messenger.

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